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IV. MAGIC AND RELIGION

The Shaman

According to Bates, each Tukuna band "obeys [?] a chief of more or less influence, according to his energy and ambition, and possesses its pagé or 'medicine-man' who fans their superstitions."[1] The impression I had was that magical knowledge constituted a prerequisite for the office of chief, but very few of those who have this knowledge show at the same time the necessary qualifications for the post. Today not one chief remains, but there are still shamans of greater or less efficiency and prestige; and since this job represents no public function but rather a personal and private one, there are bands with more than one shaman. The Tukuna term for shamans is dyu'vịta. The origin of their art is given as follows.

When auẽ'mana was two years old, she used to cry a great deal during the night. Her mother became angered by this and expelled her from the house, closing the door. auẽ'mana wept alone in the yard the whole night until a *cunaüaré* toad[2] came and carried her off. She remained in his company until she became a young girl, learning from him all the magical arts, from killing to curing by suction. Later she returned to live among men in order to practice magic. Many learned the art she taught; theretofore magic was unknown.

auẽ'mana grew very old and, when her physical strength deserted her, she asked some girls to prepare her food; but these refused because they did not like her. Then during the night, while they were sleeping, auẽ'mana extracted their leg bones from their bodies. The next morning they saw her seated beside her fire eating the marrow of the bones, since this was her only food. However, the girls could no longer get up.

When this became widely known, the people slew auẽ'mana, cutting her neck with a stone knife. She caught the blood that ran down, in her cupped hand, blew it toward the sun, and said: "u:u ta'ta pẽ gị na ñe'ị pẽ ñu a'ẽẽ!" ["The soul enter into thee, also!"] Since then, the soul of a victim enters the body of the killer.

This legend shows that between the sorcerer who inflicts disease and the curing shaman who removes disease, there is not that essential difference to which Tessmann refers.[3] According to him, the Tukuna name for the curer[4] is "dyo'wue"[5] and for the sorcerer "nokewue," a name which I have never heard and cannot explain. Once in a great while I have heard the sorcerer called dyuv|kị, but kị means only "person," and in general the term dyu'vịta is employed for both kinds of shaman. The shaman may kill one person and cure another. The fact that he possesses, among other magical attributes, the power of *espinhos*, "thorns," does not mean that these are all he uses; on the other hand, if he does not possess this power, he may acquire it at any time. One may constantly observe that among the Tukuna no shaman is ever free from suspicion.

Source of power.—Magical powers of the shamans stem from their relations with tree spirits (nai[6] arị ma:'ñ). These trees have nothing to do with those whose souls (naa'ẽ), as we have seen (p. 57), roam the night in the form of a spotted jaguar, puma, dog, or agouti. Luckily, not all trees have spirits; otherwise, clearings could not be made, since the planter must spare spirits' trees on pain of being shot by

[1] Bates, p. 401.
[2] *Hyla venulosa*; T., ẽpivẽ.
[3] Tessmann, pp. 562, 563.
[4] The word used is *curados*, but the sense indicated is *curandeiro*, "curer."—Trans.
[5] T., dyu'vịta; see above.—Trans.

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825 757 catch it by means of a leaf and transfer the slime directly to the skin of the arm, in order to produce vomiting, for example, after a drinking bout.

Other witchcraft.—Thorns, however, are not the only means by which the sor- 754 cerers destroy the objects of their malevolence. Some harbor a venomous snake in their body and send it against the enemy. Others sing to the spirit of the "shaman log" rotting on the riverbank, transforming it into a snake that will bite the enemy as he passes. Not all snake bites are caused by witchcraft, however; there are snakes that, without having any connection at all with shamans, bite anyone who passes. Again, sorcerers send the ghosts of ferocious animals against the persons whom they wish to eliminate, causing the victims to provoke bloody quarrels in which they are killed. Others, by a method I failed to learn, cause madness in their victims, who commit suicide. The suicides described earlier, and one not mentioned, [762] were all attributed to the malefactions of the celebrated warlock, u'iru, whose death I shall relate farther on.

An interesting observation concerning this madness caused by witchcraft was made to me by Calixto daueru'kj, himself a shaman of no mean reputation: "The sorcerer can injure only fools, against the wise he can do nothing." For this reason the Tukuna believe that their warlocks are powerless against civilized persons. Quirino, who died in 1932, swore that, among the Tukuna of Peruaté, Peru, he had been an eyewitness to an act of sorcery, which he described as follows. One day, while yet a boy, he followed an old man going into the jungle. There Quirino watched him weave the figure of a jaguar from uarumã, on which he placed a strip of tururí stretching from the tip of the muzzle to the tip of the tail. He had received this tururí, as well as the uarumã, from the underworld, na:'pi (the habitation of the demons). He stretched the tururí until it covered the figure entirely, afterward painting it with black spots like those of a jaguar. Then he turned to the boy and said, "Do not be alarmed!" and tossed the figure on top of an anthill (*cupim*). Immediately it was transformed into a live jaguar, which ran off howling into the jungle. This jaguar killed people and brought their bodies to the old man, who ate them.

Quirino told his father what he had seen, and the news spread, coming to the attention of the civilized Peruvians, who ordered the old man arrested and burned. This story is interesting because it proves that warlocks maintain relations also with the demons of the underworld.

754 *Identification of a murdering sorcerer.*—When a person is considered to have 682 died as a result of witchcraft, his relatives do not always take the trouble to have the murdering sorcerer discovered. Sometimes, however, they call in a competent [781] shaman, who smokes beside the corpse, goes to sleep, and sees in a dream the soul of the slayer coming to eat his victim. Formerly there were shamans who, after obliging everyone else to leave the house, sang in sight of the cadaver, smoked, and opened the earth invisibly by means of magic gestures with their hands. Through this aperture they invoked the warlock's soul, and as soon as it appeared they struck it down. The wounded soul immediately returned to the body of the sorcerer, who died within the hour.

754 Nino ɋvẽnĩ"kj told me the following about the death of Marcellino, the famous sorcerer and chief of the čara' clan, at which he was present in 1938. The soul

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motion in the current will cause madness in her enemy. If the matter is referred to a shaman, he will discover, through a dream, where the hairs are and remove them. However, this practice appears to me to have been borrowed from another people, perhaps from the Neobrazilians themselves, since the Tukuna generally do not recognize clippings of hair and similar objects as of any value for magical practices, whereas this is a common Neobrazilian belief.

EXECUTION OF A SORCERER

However, nothing proved more instructive to me as to Tukuna magical beliefs than the elimination of a famous sorcerer, during my stay in 1942, by persons with whom I was intimately associated, and who accordingly recounted to me all the details without the slightest hesitation.

On the occasion of my first visit to the Tukuna in 1929 I had heard reports that a few years before, two Tukuna of Igarapé de Belém had killed a man, after desperate resistance, whom they had accused of instigating the death of various children. They chopped the body to bits with machetes, throwing the pieces into the igarapé. One of the killers was arrested by the owner of a bazaar in Belém and was condemned to forced labor and deported for this purpose to another industrial establishment of the same owner at a great distance from Belém. One day the owner observed that the Indian wept secretly. Asking the reason, he learned that the prisoner was weeping because for a long time he had received no news from his family, who in his absence must surely be suffering many privations. The owner was thunderstruck that a brute who had hacked one of his own kind to bits should also have such worthy sentiments. He did not understand that it was real love for his children that had led the Indian to eliminate the peril which threatened their lives, nor did he realize that this ferocious murderer was actually regarded as a benefactor by his tribesmen, since his deed had freed them from the constant threat which the existence of the sorcerer constituted for all.

The story of a sorcerer.—Some ten years later, an Indian of the ẽ clan (genipapo clan) gradually became the terror of the Tukuna. They gave him the nickname u'iru (*ouro*, gold). Owing to his complicated life, he used several Christian names, the commonest one being Izidoro. One day this Indian killed his father-in-law and two brothers-in-law, with a cudgel, suspecting that they had caused the death of his mother through witchcraft. He was imprisoned in São Paulo do Olivença for a long time,* but succeeded in escaping twice. Finally he managed to escape to Peru. He later returned from there, bringing with him a great reputation as a sorcerer.

He tried to establish himself in various places successively, but in no place could he remain, because of the immediate suspicion he aroused. Also, he behaved so imprudently that any person acquainted with the Tukuna could have predicted an early and disastrous end for him. Especially when befuddled with drink, he bragged, before everyone, of the knowledge of witchcraft he had acquired in Peru, and of his victims. The refusal of a cigarette was enough to make him threaten any person with death by sorcery. He even publicly claimed the credit for three suicides that had occurred a short time before in the vicinity of Belém when he lived in the igarapé of that name.

* There is no death penalty in Brazil.—Trans.

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754 682 Threatened with death, he fled to the Rio Jacurapá, a tributary on the left bank of the Içá. At the Igarapé da Rita, when I arrived there in May, 1942, they had accused him of having caused the death of the wife of an Indian named Hippolyto šẽ'rẽk|, nephew of Nino ɛvẽn|ⁿk|; the death of another Indian's wife; the grave illness of the wife of Sebastião, Nino's brother; and finally, the illness of Hippolyto himself.

123 754 682 I encountered Hippolyto in a condition already quite serious, treated him with medicines and an adequate diet during my entire first stay in the igarapé, visited him daily, and finally effected a cure. A day later, however, he again awoke suddenly in a desperate state. As soon as he recovered his speech he told us that during the night he had seen the soul of the warlock u'iru climbing up the door of the house, armed with a club with which to kill him. In fact, u'iru struck him many blows on the head, knocking him off the platform on which he slept. While Hippolyto still lay struggling on the floor, his little boys ran to call relatives who lived close by, Sebastião and Nino. These immediately ran to Hippolyto's aid and found him stretched out senseless on the floor. However, he recovered rapidly, especially [755] after the intervention of the shaman Benedicto, to whom I myself paid a knife, a handful of cheap glass beads, and a piece of tobacco to make him treat the case, seeing that what Hippolyto needed most was spiritual medicine in accordance with his mentality. That is how I left him when I moved from Igarapé da Rita to Igarapé de São Jeronymo on the twenty-second of May. On the fifth of June, Christovão e'k|rak|, another brother of Nino and uncle of Hippolyto, while fishing in the Rio Solimões suddenly espied u'iru and his family descending the river below toward the Jacurapá, and advised his kinfolk immediately. Hippolyto then decided that the hour of vengeance was at hand, in which decision he was supported by his uncles Nino and Christovão. With all speed the three pursued u'iru in two canoes. They caught up with him in the middle of the Solimões, overpowered him, bound him hand and foot, and threw him into the river. They struck the oldest child, some three or four years old, with their paddles, also throwing it into the water. The youngest child was torn from its mother's arms and was also drowned. They struck the woman several times and tossed her into the river, too, but Christovão pulled her into his canoe and thus saved her life. The kinsmen of Hippolyto had deliberately carried out the slaughter of the sorcerer without spilling blood, [783] for the spilling of blood would have greatly complicated the subsequent purification rite.

The three slayers returned immediately to their houses, which were situated a short distance from one another on the Igarapé da Rita. Shortly before arriving at Christovão's home they landed the woman at the door of Custodio, a friendly, hard-working old Indian with a large family, who was the father-in-law of Christovão and Nino. This woman succeeded in so frightening old Custodio, lest Hippolyto and his uncles attack and destroy him and his household, that from one hour to the next he decided to flee with his entire family, very much against the wishes of his adult son, who had a good plantation at his place and all the necessary material ready for a new house. But they did leave, taking with them u'iru's widow, and sought refuge among a group of Tukuna inhabiting a tributary on the left bank of the lower Rio Jandiatuba.

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Nino and Christovão did not stop at home but, without eating or speaking to anyone, immediately left together on a hurried trip to Igarapé de Belém in search of a certain shaman for the purification the situation demanded. Hippolyto, however, weak from his long illness, arrived home so exhausted that he was again prostrated for days, incapable of following his uncles. The latter, after battling the strong currents of the Solimões all day, entered the Igarapé de Belém on the seventh. They should not have eaten anything before submitting to the purification rite, but their strength began to fail them, so they comforted themselves with a little farinha d'agua they had, eating it with spoons fashioned from leaves in order to prevent the soul (naa'ẽ) of the murdered man from entering their bodies with the food. If they had shed blood, they would also have used a stick to scratch with, instead of their fingernails, since, if blood is shed, the slayer's body becomes full of invisible blood. They did not converse during the trip, but spoke occasionally to a tree or to an ant nest as if these were people, saluting and taking leave of them and leaving them a bit of food, as if they were members of the family. Had they not followed such procedure, the soul of the slain would have entered the body of someone in the slayer's family.

Finally, they approached the residence of the shaman Geraldo, of the ɲɔ|' elan (red macaw elan), whom Nino as a member of the same moiety addressed as ma'i"ẽ, "brother" (p. 59). Showing themselves to him from afar and signaling, they made Geraldo realize that something extraordinary had happened, so he immediately went to meet them and asked what had occurred. They answered in a few words in a low voice, and he ordered them to draw the canoe ashore a bit farther ahead. Geraldo, returning to his house, bade his daughters scrape genipapo and prepare food, saying to them: "They did a turn for all of us; they killed our enemy!"

Then he joined the two men, ordered them to squat before him, and, passing his hands over them from the heels to the crown of the head, removed from them the soul of the slain, joined it together in front of them, and hurled it away, saying: "Go away! We have done this to you because you were the enemy of everyone!" Then he gave each man three peppers to eat and finally painted them with genipapo, which he had already brought on top of some leaves. He led them to the house, gave them food, and bade them farewell. Spurred by anxiety for their families, who had been left hiding in their plantations, the two again left for the Igarapé da Rita, where they arrived the morning of June 9.

As stated above, Hippolyto could not accompany the others on the trip they made in order to purify themselves, and he treated himself as best he could. Under these circumstances, the slayer, feeling the dead man's soul squeezing his heart, must for two months drink a brew made from pupunheira root (*Gulielma* sp.).

Meanwhile I was attending a puberty ceremony celebrated in a house half a league up the mouth of the Igarapé da Rita, on the Solimões, where some other guests informed me of the event. After the feast I went down to the settlement of Santa Rita, where the Neobrazilians told me with evident satisfaction that "the Indians of the igarapé had all fled." I at once entered this tributary, where I found all the Indians except the family of old Custodio, who had actually fled but later on returned at my invitation. From place to place the Indians accompanied me, increasing in number at each stop, until we were all gathered at Nino's house,

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754 including the slayers, who had arrived that morning, horribly painted with black from head to foot. The atmosphere was rather anxious, and their satisfaction at 682 seeing me so unexpectedly was obvious, especially on Nino's part; if I had not come, they would have searched for me the following day at Igarapé de São Jeronymo, where I made my headquarters. Calmly and clearly Nino told me what had happened: "We had to do it. But now that it is done I don't want to fool with anyone else, just live in peace," he said. But naturally the case was not closed.

The civilized authorities, though aware of what had happened, made no move, but a brother of the dead man, informed by another relative, came from the outskirts of Belém with his three grown sons in pursuit of the slayers. Strangely enough, the party first came ashore at the place of another brother of Nino and Christovão who lived by himself on the banks of the Solimões, and he immediately sent to warn his kinsman. It is clear that if the sorcerer's brother had come to avenge u'iru's death immediately, he would not have pulled ashore at the house of the murderers' brother.

However, Nino, Christovão, and Hippolyto passed the night together with loaded shotguns and machetes at hand. The night was absolutely dark. About nine o'clock, when I rashly went down to the landing, accompanied by Nino's three sons, we saw slowly approaching from the river a small light, resembling the lighted cigarette of a person silently rowing inshore; it finally stopped. Frightened, the children ran to the house while I went down to the landing, where I discovered that the light was due to a large firefly that had lit on one of the canoes inshore.

I turned back with the insect in my hand, when all the Indians in the house came from all sides to meet me, for they were terrified at my unheard-of audacity. The [774] point was that the arrival of a sorcerer's soul is announced in the dark by a small [293] firefly-like light that emanates from the tucum-nut ring the sorcerer, like most Tukuna, wears on his finger. My attitude in abstaining from all criticism or moral [123] judgment and in accepting the tragedy as a consummated fact visibly cleared the atmosphere and calmed their spirits. When I returned to Igarapé de São Jeronymo on the following day, the situation was almost back to normal.

In fact, until my departure in September nothing untoward occurred. However, I believe that the brother of the murdered u'iru will still try to avenge him at the first opportunity.

Another method of purification.—According to what he himself told me, Calixto 783 daueru'kj, to whom also killers repair for purification, has a method slightly dif- 775 ferent from that of his colleague Geraldo. First he washes the slayer's arms from top to bottom with envira de matamatá. Then he invokes the soul of the slain, by means of a song and tobacco smoke. The dead man's soul, surrounded by the smoke, which it involuntarily swallows, finally crouches down, weak and inoffensive, before the shaman, who covers it with still more smoke and, fanning the smoke, makes the soul disappear. Afterward he paints with genipapo dye only the forearms of the killer. Even with this, however, the dead man's soul is not completely annihilated. Thus, after the death of ču'na, a Peruvian sorcerer who had fled to Brazil, where he was killed by pursuers from his own country, his soul "shot" his brother-in-law with "arrows," a fact recognized by the shaman Airú of Ilha dos Guaribas, who succeeded in curing the sufferer.

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Such are the legends. The idea of heaven as an upper world similar to the earth and with inhabitants like those of the world below is encountered in the legends of the culture-hero brothers relating to the theft of fire (see p. 130) and the origin of languages. These tell how in the old days there was free passage between the two worlds, how this was interrupted, and how thereafter an attempt was made to reëstablish it. All these motives are so common in American mythology that they do not merit further comment.

ta-ë' *and the souls.*—Quite different, however, is the concept of the most important personage of the upper world, ta-ë'. I do not know of any similar figure in the religion of other tribes. Nothing is known of her origin. She is apparently as ancient as the heaven in which she lives, and is immortal but definitely not omnipotent, nor omniscient, nor infallible. Overburdened with tasks, she may involuntarily cause damage to men through her mistakes. Nothing material in the world was created by her, nor does she govern anything; therefore she is neither the "Common Mother" nor the "Primary Mother" in Baldus' terminology.

Prayers are not directed to her, nor does she receive sacrifices. She has nothing to do directly with the culture-hero brothers, who equal her in importance, or with the spirits of the trees or the demons (ńɔɔ') of the lower world. No shaman is in communication with her. Nevertheless, for the Tukuna she is a figure of great importance and respect, because of her inseparable connection with the notion of sin and subsequent punishment, in life or after death, since she is the mistress of that part of the human soul called "naa'ë." With the other part of the soul, called "načii'" (shade of the deceased), she has nothing to do.

ta-ë' does not represent a divine justice that tots up the sins and good deeds of the soul. She takes into consideration only three categories of crime: incest, infanticide (including voluntary abortion), and murder through witchcraft. She does not bother with such trifles as theft or a hot-blooded killing. Incest (vɔ:'mači) is a transgression of the law of exogamy which she established when she taught the first men to which clan each belonged, making them taste the jacuruxy broth (see pp. 58 and 130); this was the only time, however, that she intervened in the work of the culture heroes. Incest is the only crime for which ta-ë' eventually punishes the sinner, by madness while he is still living.

I have already discussed the fate of an infanticide's soul (p. 69). When the soul of a sorcerer appears before ta-ë', she treats it in the same fashion as she does that of an infanticide; in fact, the three sins mentioned above are considered almost equal. The gravity of a crime depends upon whether the sin was committed thoughtlessly and with some extenuating circumstances, and whether it is repeated.

If there are extenuating circumstances, the sinner is purified by one of the čorë'ruma, which licks him from toe to crown. However, even if the naa'ë of a perverse and stubborn sinner slips past the tɔ/ri'ta gate, it is torn to shreds by the čorë'ruma or rejected by ta-ë', who orders lightning to cast it down on the earth again, or even sends it below to the underworld (na:'pį), where it is transformed into a tiny frog (nu:'gu), with whose death it vanishes.

It is noteworthy that the Tukuna regard as crimes these three sins which not only harm the individual but are also ruinous for humanity as a whole: "Thou